May 2, 2000

David R. Wrone
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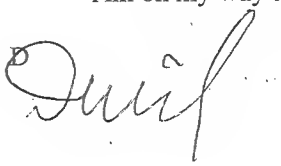
Dear Harold

Enclosed are two things. 1) is a page from David Kaiser on Sir Isaiah Berlin's comment on JFK's mind, along with footnote page.

2) a copy of the Luke Savage review of Posner's Killing the Dream published in the Journal of American History vol. 86, no. 4. March 2000 that just arrived in my mail box today. I wish to write a letter to the editor in reply and am presently thinking about what to say. It is so bad.

Am on my way today to see about the flannel shirts. 16/3



ence and energy and time, so that Harlem's children might grow stronger in mind, in their spirits. So doing, those two psychologists became moral witnesses for the rest of us, and their clinic became a cornerstone for a profession badly in need of its own kind of ethical introspection.

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Killing the Dream: James Earl Ray and the Assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. By Gerald Posner. (New York: Random House, 1998. xii, 446 pp. $25.00, ISBN 0-375-50082-0.)

Dexter King might have extended his hand to the dying man and said: "My family and I *forgive* you, Mr. Ray." That would have been consistent with his father's message of social justice and human reconciliation. Alas, he did not. He extended his hand and said: "My family and I *believe* you, Mr. Ray." That was more in the tradition of Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass.* There, when Alice declared "one ca'n't believe impossible things," the White Queen retorted: "I daresay you haven't had much practice. When I was your age, I always did it for half-an-hour a day. Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast."

Fortunately, Gerald Posner has published an exceptionally careful, fully documented, and highly readable study of the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. and the thirty years of inquiry into, and conspiracy theories about, it. Undoubtedly, conspiracies do occur, and, undoubtedly, the circle around Martin Luther King Jr. had abundant reason to suspect conspiracy in the death of the civil rights leader. Yet, Posner clears away the debris, not of "six impossible things," but of dozens of equally unlikely things proposed by conspiracy theorists over the last thirty years. His conclusion: James Earl Ray was the lone assassin of Martin Luther King. His undoubted racism probably an insufficient cause of action, Ray may have anticipated financial reward, perhaps the fifty thousand dollars offered by the St. Louis attorney John Sutherland. He may or may not have had co-conspirators, but there is simply no credible evidence that they included President Lyndon B. Johnson, military intelligence units, the Central Intelligence Agency or the Federal Bureau of Investigation, as Martin Luther King III recently insisted and conspiracy theorists have long suspected. If Ray had co-conspirators, Posner concludes, they were more likely his brothers Jerry and John.

Nature and nurture had conspired to produce an antisocial brood in the Rays. The "father's side of the family had a nearly one-hundred-year unbroken history of violence and run-ins with the law," says Posner. The alcoholism, crime, ignorance, poverty, and patental absenteeism in which the Rays grew up in Illinois river towns and rural Missouri give definition to the overused phrase, dysfunctional family. James Earl Ray became a marksman in the armed forces but otherwise failed at that common means of socialization. A quiet, even a shy, man, he learned to speak—not to reveal himself but to give alibis. For nearly thirty years, after recanting his confession in the assassination of King, Ray blamed "Raoul." Near the end of his life, he identified a picture of "Raul." Ray's path could not have crossed that of the Portuguese immigrant he fingered, but Dexter King told a national television audience: "Raul has been found." The heedless righteousness of conspiracy theorists threw the life of an innocent man and his family into turmoil. Nor have we heard the end of it. Oliver Stone reportedly waits in the wings with a motion picture. Read Posner; the movie will be a predictably elaborate commentary on the public's eagerness to be titillated by "six impossible things before breakfast."

Ralph E. Luker
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African Americans and Jews in the Twentieth Century: Studies in Convergence and Conflict. Ed. by V. P. Franklin et al. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1998. x, 366 pp. $34.95, ISBN 0-8262-1197-6.)

This collection had its origin in a symposium held at Washington University on "Blacks and Jews: An American Historical Perspective" in

December 1993. Too many of the people who have examined black-Jewish relations, V. P. Franklin observes in his excellent introduction, generated "more heat than light on this very complex and controversial topic." "Spokespersons and writers," who received most of the attention, Franklin continues, "offered opinions based mainly on their personal experiences and current political agendas." Thus participants presented papers that tried to rectify existing misconceptions and misperceptions. Those papers have now been revised and put together in one excellent volume.

The generally high quality of the essays allows readers to reevaluate some of their ideas about the nature of black-Jewish relations in the twentieth century. For example, Herbert Hill's revealing contribution on the evolution of Jews from workers to upper-level union officers, while African Americans and Hispanics replaced them in the shops, required me to rethink some of my heretofore deep-seated convictions about beneficent unions. Nancy Haggard-Gilson's critique of black conservatives and Jewish neoconservatives is also a gem that carefully examines the attitudes of those people and then exposes the shallowness of their arguments.

Certain characteristics can be seen in most of the essays. Generally well written and provocative, they are, for the most part, based on secondary sources. Hasia R. Diner and Cheryl Greenberg engaged in primary research, but their contributions confirm existing ideas with rich data. Marshall F. Stevenson Jr.'s analysis blends primary and secondary sources as he details the intense anti-Semitism that existed in Detroit through the 1950s.

I found one essay perplexing. V. P. Franklin states in "The Portrayal of Jews in *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*" that "recent social scientific surveys of African Americans . . . suggest that religious 'myths from the past' encourage favorable artitudes toward Jews." This contradicts most material and all the polls that I have seen dating back to 1939. Even Gary T. Marx, who postulated in *Protest and Prejudice* (1967) that African Americans were less anti-Semitic than whites, also noted that over 50 percent of the African Americans that he questioned dubbed "Jewish" economic practices nefarious. Unfortunately, Franklin's only source for his conclusion is one survey conducted in 1986 that was a secondary source written by someone in 1994.

In a collection of this type published in 1998 a reader might have expected to find about the controversy over whether, and to what extent, Jews participated in the African slave trade. It also would have been appropriate to include detailed analyses of Louis Farrakhan, but there is no reference in the entire collection to either of those leaders. To publish a book on black-Jewish concerns in 1998 and have little discussion of such central topics as these two individuals strikes me as poor judgment.

These caveats aside, the articles in this volume are certainly worth reading. They shed new light on black-Jewish relations and will inform the reader.

Leonard D
University
Tucson, Ari

A Nation within a Nation: Amiri B. Roi Jones) and Black Power Politics. K Woodard. (Chapel Hill: University Carolina Press, 1999. xxii, 329 $45.00, ISBN 0-8078-2457-7. Pape ISBN 0-8078-4761-5.)

Komozi Woodard's *A Nation within* is the best published work on the bl movement to date, because it is too close study of a local movement, the tee for a Unified Newark (CFUN). Newark chapter of the Congress People (CAP), led by Amiri Baraka. strength of Woodard's book is its a CFUN/CAP's day-to-day activities. shows the considerable organizing Baraka and CFUN/CAP, which led t tion of the first black mayor of a n Coast city in 1970. Woodard also question truisms about the antagon tions between cultural nationalist tions, such as CFUN and Maulana Ka Organization, and revolutionary n such as the Black Panther party and Lords party, as they worked out local Woodard does not minimize the ob